

DANIEL AND THE LION'S DEN

And the Rebuilding of the Temple.

One of these events is recorded in the sixth chapter of the prophecy of Daniel; the other is in the first chapter of the book of Ezra. They are far apart in the sacred volume. Is there any special connection between them?

Apparently they both happened in the first year of King Cyrus. Let us not forget that Darius was not king of the Medo-Persian empire, but only viceroy under Cyrus. When therefore we read in the sixth of Daniel that Darius appointed three presidents of the empire, we understand that it was done by authority of Cyrus, and of course subject to his review.

Let us note one other fact. About two hundred years before the birth of Cyrus there lived a prophet in Judah by the name of Isaiah. We may well suppose that Cyrus, away off in the realms of Persia, had never heard of this old prophet and his writings. And yet in his writings there was a very distinct description of Cyrus. It is in the forty-fourth and forty-fifth chapters "Thus saith Jehovah, to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, Jehovah, which called thee by thy name am the God of Israel. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways. He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives."

"I am Jehovah that makest all things. . . . That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers, that saith of Cyprus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid."

In the (apparent) absence of Cyrus his viceroy, Darius, (who was also his uncle) appointed over the Medo-Persian empire three presidents, of whom Daniel was chief. His coadjutors, envious that a Jew should have the preference over them, had him cast into the den of lions. Darius punished them in kind, casting them, prime ministers as they were, into the same den. Cyrus returns. What has transpired in my absence? And the story is related to him. Bring this Daniel. Tell me about your God. And Daniel tells him and reads to him the forty-fourth of Isaiah, written two centuries before. Well may Darius gaze in astonishment. Here is the prophecy of his wonderful victories over Babylon. Here is the record of his triumph. He is amazed.

But this prophecy goes further. It says that Cyrus shall release the Jewish captives and let them return to their own land. It tells him that Jehovah, the God of Israel has appointed him to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. We can almost hear him reply to Daniel, Yes, I will fulfill the command of this wonderful God, Jehovah.

And in the decree of Cyrus, quoted in the first chapter of Ezra, we find Cyrus, the heathen, calling the God of Israel by his name Jehovah, and writing,

"Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, Jehovah, God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth." Yes, in view of Isaiah's prophecy, he well says, "hath given me." "And he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem." Therefore to the Jews, he writes, "Let him (that will) go up to Jerusalem and build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. . . . He is the God."

Both events happened in the first year of Cyrus. Can we dissociate them?

Daniel was risking his life when he persisted in praying. God made his firmness the instrument of the rebuilding of the temple.

In this, is there any lesson for us?

IF ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

Sone one at our elbow remarked just now, "San Francisco had a fearful warning in the earthquake three years ago. Is religion on the decline there?" It was a warning. It made every heart to quake. It brought to mind the fact that God is taking cognizance of what transpires on earth. And for a few hours the terrified people out in the open squares did pray. Yes, they prayed earnestly for deliverance from sudden death. And then they went back to their old neglect of God and of his sanctuary.

The same has been the experience of other cities. Fifty years ago, Norfolk, Va., was the scene of terrible ravages from yellow fever. But in the winter that followed, Norfolk was by no means a city of special piety. Rather that winter was marked by unusual gayety and dissipation.

It was even so in the days of Israel. The subjects of Arab had suffered from three years of drought. Elijah had presented before them the fact that their idolatry had been the cause of it. Yet on the next day Elijah had to flee because no man would stand up for God and defend the prophet.

In the appeal of the rich man in hell to "Father Abraham", recorded in Luke 16: 30, we find this expression: "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Such is the fancy of many an unconverted man. And many a sinner is continuing in impenitent life hoping for some sudden warning to make him change.

Nay it is not thus. Sufferings or calamities do not soften the heart. Only by prayer and the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit can the sinner be led to Christ.

A new "Christian Science Church" is about to be set up in New York City in opposition to the Eddy organization. Its motto is to be "Christian Science Purged of Eddyism." Its chief organizer and supporter declares that "Christian Science, as now organized and directed, stands for graft, idolatry, and superstition. The New Christian Science Church, to be launched next Sunday will be honest and sane. I have learned positively that Mary Baker Eddy is still alive. But the story of her leadership is a wicked fiction. She is an old woman, close to death, helpless and in total ignorance of the things done in her name by her relentless captors."